

June 26, 2014

Walter Lamb  
Ballona Wetlands Land Trust  
2811 Pico Blvd  
Santa Monica, CA 90405

Dear Mr. Lamb:

I am responding to a recent email you sent to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator McCarthy and others concerning the Santa Monica Bay National Estuary Program (NEP).

As you know, EPA is currently conducting an evaluation of the Santa Monica NEP. Program evaluations are conducted every five years to determine whether adequate progress is being made implementing the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans to merit continued funding under §320 of the Clean Water Act. The evaluation includes a site visit, which was conducted on June 10 – 11, 2014. The site visit included program briefings by Santa Monica Bay Restoration Program staff and field visits to several project sites, including the Ballona Wetlands which was the subject of your email.

Restoration of the Ballona Wetlands is a component of the Santa Monica Bay NEP's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (also known as the Bay Restoration Plan). As the largest and best opportunity to restore estuarine habitat in Los Angeles County, EPA recognizes the importance of this coastal resource and the complexity that goes along with such a project. In addition, we appreciate that the Santa Monica Bay NEP is a member of the project team working on its plan and design. Their role is to provide scientific and technical information, such as present and historical ecological data.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife owns the land and is responsible for final project decisions. Before any restoration activities can begin, CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) and NEPA (National Environmental Protection Act) requirements must be completed and permits must be obtained from various public entities including the Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the California Coastal Commission. The CEQA/NEPA work and the permitting process are underway and I encourage you to participate in those processes which provide for public comment opportunities regarding the project decisions that may be of concern to you.

If you have any further questions on this matter, please contact Sam Ziegler, Chief of our Watersheds Section at (415) 972-3399.

Sincerely,

Jane Diamond  
Director  
Water Division